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the weakness of the bond ; and this is due, on the author's principles, to an inferior moral condition in the constituents of the confederacy, which renders them incapable of that self-sacrifice and self-surrender to the general weal which exist in the higher life of the nation, and are essential to it.

The vicious influence of the author's formulas is shown again in his representation of the war of the Southern Rebellion as primarily a conflict between the nation and the confederacy rather than between freedom and slavery. But clearly slavery was the cause of the assertion of the confederate principle, and without slavery the Rebellion would not have taken place. The disloyalty of the slave States to the nation is the strongest possible illustration of the author's doctrine, that national life is a development of moral life. Southern slavery sapped the moral strength of the people, and thereby weakened the social principle that seeks expression in the unity of the nation. Because slavery was immoral it was sectional, because freedom was moral it was national.

In point, also, of literary execution, the work is not a success. This is the more remarkable, as it gives evidence of a nice literary appreciation, and is marked by a rare felicity of quotation, especially from Shakespeare and the Bible. The constant recurrence, however, of the same abstract, undefined phrases and formulas, and the great sameness in the structure of the sentences, give to the style a certain awkwardness, stiffness, and often obscurity. It is the style of a person unused to giving his thoughts expression.

Nevertheless, the work is conceived in a high philosophical spirit ; it represents the long labor of a scholar and a thinker, working at the central truths of the state ; it is the expression of a devout, refined, and cultivated mind, familiar with profound and varied studies, and holding very positive convictions upon the religious, philosophical, and political questions of the day. If not the work of a master, it is that of an earnest disciple. It teaches the impressive lesson that the highest crime against the nation is treason to its moral life, and may be read with profit by every lover of his country who would study the foundations of its permanent well-being.

2. — *Poems*. By DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI. Author's edition. Boston : Roberts Brothers. 1870. pp. 282.

For some twenty years Mr. Dante Rossetti has been more or less well known, even to persons not counted among his particular admirers, as a man of great poetical susceptibility and refined poetical

taste. His translations of the "*Vita Nuova*," of the "*Inferno*," and other mediæval Italian poetry, abundantly proved this, and proved, too, that he had in a high degree the power of literary expression. Despite, then, that presumption of incapacity very rightly entertained against a man who does not make public trial of a strength for which public acknowledgment is asked, there has been a disposition to give Mr. Rossetti the credit his immediate circle of friends asked for him as a poet of extraordinary abilities. It is true that he has printed, besides his translations, some original poems which would have served as confirmatory evidence in his favor; but the distinction between the printing of a work and the publication of it is not often better marked than in the case of "*The Blessed Damozel*," in its earlier form; and the general public has, until the appearance of this volume, known but little more of his poetry than that it was handed about among a few friends, and by them admired with what to most discriminating persons seemed like extravagance. This, for the reason just mentioned, that the world is not much inclined to believe in poetry which is deliberately and persistently hid under a bushel; and, secondly, because readers and observers who have discernment are apt to feel a general distrust of the capacities of such natures as seem to have the weakness of contemptuously or with morbid uneasiness shunning the judges who alone can make general award, and seeking the presumably partial applause of a few; and, finally, because the few who in this instance called us to admire were not judges in whom there is entire confidence. It is not, we imagine, hazarding much to say that instructed lovers of poetry feel no great confidence in the justice of a poet's claim to praise, merely because he is enthusiastically praised by Mr. Swinburne, who, his friends may profitably remind themselves, praises Mr. Walt Whitman, and puts him beside William Blake; or because he is admired by Mr. William Rossetti, who has done poetry no better service, much as he has written in poetry and criticism, than he did when he carried the strict Pre-Raphaelite theory of poetry to its legitimate end, and absurdly versified a criminal trial and its cross-examinations; or because he is declared most admirable by Mr. William Morris, whose pretty stories should not long blind many to his emptiness of matter and his extremely elaborate simplicity of manner,—fit conclusion, paradoxical though it may seem to say so, to the Pre-Raphaelite grotesqueness and weakness of his earlier "*Defence of Guenevere*," with its strained and false mediævalism; or because he is praised by Miss Jean Ingelow; or by Mr. Thomas Woolner, whom, however, we ought not to mention without saying that—unless it be Miss Christina Rossetti, at her best, when she is picturesque and

not too Pre-Raphaelite, and passionate and not too sensuous — he is by very much indeed the simplest, honestest, and most thoroughly pleasing of all the group of poets with whom he is usually classed. Better than negative praise, too, can be given him, as any one may see who will look at “My Beautiful Lady.”

It is in this circle of poets and artists, and their intimates, some of them having in their capacity as artists a strong claim on the respect of people of cultivation, and most of them being at least interesting to people of cultivation, that Mr. Rossetti has had his high reputation. But as we have said, their *dicta* have not been of wide acceptance among those not given over to the cultus of Pre-Raphaelitism. Of this cultus it is not out of our present province to speak, for it has affected the literary as well as the pictorial or plastic expression of all who gave themselves up to it; but it is beyond our ability to treat of it as it should be treated of if one would make thoroughly clear the genesis and character of the works done under its influence. It may, however, be permitted any one to say that it had an absurd and ridiculous side; and if this aspect of it be once seen, the investigator and critic will doubtless find himself disembarassed of some of that hindering reverence with which it is probable he might otherwise approach works which have been so very emphatically pronounced admirable and excellent, and which are to most critics strange enough and new enough to be not a little baffling. He does not need to be at all a hardened critic in order to laugh at the projectors of the “Germ,” for example, admired artists though they be, when he learns that, inasmuch as they believed that they had before them in conducting that iconoclastic magazine a work of great difficulty and labor, they decided to indicate this belief by always pronouncing the name of their periodical with the initial letter hard. This seems too absurd to be readily believed, — that a number of grown men should go about saying “germ” with a hard *g*, because they had resolved to paint as good pictures, and write as good poems, and make as good reviews of other people’s poems as they possibly could. Yet, if a layman with no recognized right to say anything about art may say so, there is nothing in this procedure which is essentially inconsistent with the characteristics of the works which Pre-Raphaelitic art has produced, — as indeed how should there be? Over-strenuousness, enthusiasm in need of reasonable direction, self-conscious, crusading zeal, the exaggeration of surface-matters at the expense of the essential thing sought, affectation, which, however, may probably be the expression of genuine moods of minds in natures too little comprehensive, — all these one can fancy that one sees in the pictures and poems just as in this baptism of the magazine which the school set

on foot. The "Germ," by the way, lived through four numbers, which are now to a certain extent curiosities worth looking at, as indicating the aims or the feelings of a school of art which has made much noise, and also as containing some of the first work of Mr. Dante Rossetti, Miss Rossetti, and Mr. Woolner; and moreover several designs by Pre-Raphaelite artists which, although generally feeble both in subject and treatment, possess, in one or two instances, what is held to be characteristic merit and characteristic defect. Not to insist on what is perhaps not very well worth attention, but by way of corroborating the evidence which our story of the "Germ" may offer, we may mention the fact that some years since, when something like an American Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in the city of New York, where an American "Germ" too was established and lived for a while, it was seriously discussed by the brethren whether or not they should discard the ordinary clothes of contemporary mankind, and endue themselves with doublets and long hose and pantofles, and such other articles of dress as doubtless had so much to do with making the Titians and Angelos and Andreas of the old days of art.

In the volume in hand Mr. Rossetti puts before the public the poems which have assured his friends of his genius, and offers us the means of making an advised estimate of his value as a poet to the world at large, which cannot intelligently judge of his value to particular schools, but which can with sufficient intelligence compare his productions with the general body of poetry. Opinions must differ; but the prevailing opinion, we should say, will be that we have in Mr. Rossetti another poetical man, and a man markedly poetical, and of a kind apparently though not radically different from any other of our secondary writers of poetry, but that we have not in him a true poet of any weight. He certainly has taste, and subtlety, and skill, and sentiment in excess, and excessive sensibility, and a sort of pictorial sensuousness of conception which gives warmth and vividness to the imagery that embodies his feelings and desires. But he is all feelings and desires; and he is of the earth, earthy, though the earth is often bright and beautiful pigments; of thought and imagination he has next to nothing. At last one discovers, what has seemed probable from the first, that one has been in company with a lyrical poet of narrow range; with a man who has nothing to say but of himself; and of himself as the yearning lover, mostly a sad one, of a person of the other sex. Where there seems to be something more than this, as in such a dramatic piece as "Sister Helen," for instance, the substratum is usually the same; and the essentially subjective, and narrowly subjective character of the poem is only temporarily concealed by the author's

favorite mediæval dress, which is never obtained except at the cost of throwing over the real life of the Middle Ages the special color which it suits the author's purpose to throw over it. Mediævalism of this kind, elaborately appointed and equipped, has always been common enough, and certainly it has great powers of imposition; but what is it usually but our taking, each of us as it chances to suit his taste or his purpose, some one aspect of the true life of the Middle Ages, or, as it may happen, the classic ages, or the age of Queen Anne say, or King David, or Governor Winthrop, and making that stand for the objective truth? With Mr. Morris, say, the Middle Ages mean helmets and the treacheries of long-footed knights who fiercely love ladies who embroider banners, and wear samite gowns, and watch ships sailing out to sea, as do illuminated ladies, out of all drawing, in old manuscripts. Another man's Middle Ages are made up of tourneys and knightly courtesies. The England of Queen Anne is to such and such a man all coffee-houses and wigs and small-swords; and to such and such another, Governor Winthrop's New England is going always to church, and hanging witches, and austere keeping fasts. We confess that whenever this particular form of self-indulgence is accompanied by an ostentation of exactness and of absolute reproduction of the past times, or when, as in the case of a certain school of writers, the impression given is the impression of the writer's inability to live the life of his own age, and to see that in that also the realities of life and thought, the substance and subject of all really sound poetry, present themselves for treatment, we confess that we experience a feeling not far removed from contemptuous resentment. Surely there is something wrong in the thinker or the poet — shall we say, too, in the artist? — who can content himself with his fancies of the thoughts and feelings and views of times past, and who can better please himself with what after all must be more or less unreal phantasmagoria, than with the breathing life around him.

Considered as a lyrical poet pure and simple, a lyrical verse-making lover, apart from whatever praise or blame belongs to him as a Pre-Raphaelite in poetry whose Pre-Raphaelitism is its most obvious feature, it will be found that Mr. Rossetti must be credited with an intensity of feeling which is overcast almost always with a sort of morbidness, and which usually trenches on the bound of undue sensuousness of tone. Pretty and natural, for example, is the idea, in "The Stream's Secret," of the lover's making the wandering brook, endowed with the kind of animate existence that is so readily accorded the running stream, the confidant and messenger of his mistress. But the somewhat too erotic key-note is not long in making itself heard here, any more than in most of the other poems:

" Ah me! with what proud growth
 Shall that hour's trusting race be run;
 While, for each several sweetness still begun
 Afresh, endures love's endless drouth:
 Sweet hands, sweet hair, sweet cheeks, sweet eyes, sweet mouth,
 Each singly wooed and won.

Therefore, when breast and cheek
 Now part, from long embraces free, —
 Each on the other gazing shall but see
 A self that has no need to speak:
 All things are sought, yet nothing more to seek, —
 One love in unity."

This certainly, if a little obscure and stammering in detail, and not much worth doing, is in the general forcible and vigorous. Freer from the fault of sexuality, if that is what we are to call it, is the skilful and even beautiful little poem entitled "The Portrait," though in that also there is an undercurrent of earthly passionateness which marks it as in tune with its author's all but unvarying mode of conceiving of love, which is with him, if never quite mere appetite, never, on the other hand, affection. This poem is, however, well worth attention for its delicacy and subdued warmth of passion, — the beloved woman being now dead, and the regard for the portrait tempering the love for its original; and also it is good by reason of some excellent pictures which it contains.

Picturesqueness, indeed, is, as might have been expected, one of our author's strong points. For one thing because he looks on nature with the eyes of a man whose business in the world it is to see and make pictures; and it might be not easy to find, outside of the delightful poems of Mr. William Barnes, who has so extraordinary an eye for the landscape-picturesque, any more decided recent successes in this way than Mr. Rossetti has made. Then, for another thing, he looks on life with the feeling of a born painter, whose natural instrument of expression is color, and who can with more ease indicate and subtly hint than he can clearly enunciate with intellectual precision what he wishes to convey to us. Thus he is no doubt at a disadvantage with most of his critics, and has for the necessary injustice, to call it so, which these do him, only the somewhat imperfect compensation of pleasing with an excess of vague pleasure a certain number of his more impressible readers of like mind with himself. The sensuousness, too, of which we speak, making it natural for him to seek palpable, tangible images in which to embody his conception, is another allied cause of his strength as a pictorial writer.

The union of the qualities we have mentioned — his warmth of pas-

sion, his picturesque power, his mediævalism in its apparently less affected form, his skill in the technic of verse — are perhaps best seen in the best known and, all things considered, the best worth knowing, of his poems; though we should say that having had exceptional luck with it, “The Blessed Damozel” is not that work of his in which he himself is most distinctly visible. Nor would it, we think, be true to say that there are not passages in other poems of his in which he, by glimpses, appears at greater altitude than in this one, and which gives the reader a better opinion of him. Though, for the matter of that, in “The Blessed Damozel” he is hedged about with that peculiar respect which is given to the maker of a rounded and complete work, — that respect accorded to a creator, and which is not given to the same man even when he is producing sweeter and deeper detached strains than are to be found in the melodious harmony of his perfected symphony or oratorio. The poem is no doubt fresh in the memory of many who first made its acquaintance twenty years or so ago. It is improved in the present edition; the changes, we observe, all being in the direction of less quaintness and Pre-Raphaelite roughness and more definiteness of thought, — albeit there is perhaps a little loss of the force and strikingness which the old quaintness had. Here, for example, we give the second stanza as it appeared in the “Germ,” to which we prefix the first stanza as it reads in the volume before us: —

“The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand
And the stars in her hair were seven.

“Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary’s gift
On the neck meetly worn;
Her hair, lying down her back,
Was yellow like ripe corn.”

In the new edition we have this reading of the last four verses, which we give by way of illustrating briefly the nature and effect of the changes that have been made: —

“But a white rose of Mary’s gift
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.”

In the first stanza, too, there have been similar changes. Formerly

“Her blue, grave eyes were deeper much
Than the deep water even,” —

the color of the eyes having now been changed apparently from blue to dark ; and the verses smoothened and modernized a little. These alterations are less considerable than many others which the author has made, but they illustrate as well as any others our remark as to the kind of alterations that have been made.

Of the rest of the books we have little to say as regards particular pieces. The sonnets descriptive of pictures will no doubt be accepted as skilfully interpretative by many persons who know already the pictures upon which they are based ; and doubtless the sonnets giving subjects for pictures will have a value in the eyes of artists, which they can hardly have in those of literary readers. We may venture to say that they seem to us, as sonnets merely, not very good ; although they are carefully constructed and are in that respect to be commended, as well as for occasional happinesses of thought. The same thing we should say of the other sonnets, but not without selecting one or two as examples of Mr. Rossetti's general weakness, both as concerns his capacity of thought and his over-warmth of temperament. It is something very like morbidly gratified sexual sensuousness, too, that we discover in "Jenny," a poem in which a young man "moralizes" a young woman of the town whom he has accompanied home from a place of amusement, and comments on her way of life and her probable character and fate after the manner of Mr. Browning in his analytical moods. It is the fashion to say of such things, that, although it is difficult to see how the author contrived it, he has managed with consummate skill to avoid the intrinsic indelicacy of his subject. As a matter of fact, however, it may be doubted if the inherent indelicacy is not what he just has not avoided ; and whether all writers who practise this sort of morbid anatomy do not do something towards debauching the minds of a certain number of their readers. Such things tend, we imagine, to confound the distinction between morality and immorality, and have much the same effect as the prurient moral novels with which M. Feuillet, or the excellent M. Dumas *fills* occasionally buttresses the foundations of society. Another piece in which Mr. Rossetti shows that he has felt the influence of Mr. Browning is "A Last Confession," which is one of the most direct and simple poems in the volume, and perhaps the one which is most fairly on a common and ordinary level of thought and sympathy. Worthy of mention, too, for various reasons, are "Eden Bower," with its curious legend and successful versification which not even the device of a burden can destroy ; "The Woodspurge," for its truthful, forcible presentation of the facts of external nature, and of the psychological fact that sometimes, in moments of the greatest pain and distress, some trivial thing will impress itself ineffaceably upon the memory ; "The

Honeysuckle," also, which succeeds "The Woodspurge," and like it has one or two of our author's exasperating bits of quaintness, is both pretty and true, and may almost be set down with its companion as making the most satisfactory pair of poems in the book; the translations from the French of Villon are felicitously done; and if there is anybody who wants to get at once a full mouthful of mediævalism such as may keep him cloyed for a good while, and who has not at hand Mr. Morris's "Defence of Guenevere" where the poet is a little better concealed and the mediævalism is more out and out hot and strong, we advise him to turn to "John of Tours," "Sister Helen," "The Staff and Scrip," and "My Father's Close."

To whatever the reader turns he will, we think, as we have said, come at last to the conclusion that Mr. Rossetti is essentially a subjective poet who deals with the passion of love, and who has at command a set of properties which have the advantage of being comparatively new and striking to most readers and have the disadvantage of being thought by most readers to be merely properties. And the love to which he confines himself will be found to be at bottom a sensuous and sexual love, refined to some extent by that sort of worship of one's mistress as saint and divinity which the early Italians made a fashion, certainly, whether or not it was ever a faith by which they lived. It is, we take it, to his long study in this school that Mr. Rossetti owes much of this turn that his thoughts take. See, for example (to instance hastily), how in his own translation of Giacomino Pugliesi's poem "Of his Dead Lady," the lover anticipates the Blessed Damozel going to God with her lover by the hand and asking that his and her heaven should be merely to be together as on earth:—

"Had I my well belovéd, I would say
To God, unto whose bidding all things bow,
That we were still together night and day."

And here again, by the way, in Jacopo da Lentino, is a hint of less consequence for the yearning of the damozel:—

"I have it in my heart to serve God so
That unto Paradise I shall repair,—
The holy place through the which everywhere
I have heard say that joy and solace flow,—
Without my lady I were loath to go,
She who has the bright face and the bright hair."

Besides its sensuousness and its sort of ecstasy, sadness and dejection characterize Mr. Rossetti's love, which sheds tears and looks backwards with regret, and forwards without cheerfulness, and yearningly into the mould of the grave, as often as it looks backwards upon remembered raptures and forwards to an eternity of locked embraces and speechless

gazing upon the beloved. His love is, on the whole, rather depressing. It is, however, past doubt that, although the world at large is not going to give Mr. Rossetti anything like the place that has been claimed for him, — though it is even probable that the fashion of his poetry will very soon pass away and be gone for good, and the opinion of his genius fall to an opinion that he is a man of the temperament of genius lacking power to give effect, in words at least, to a nature and gifts rare rather than strong or valuable, nevertheless it will be admitted that he is an elaborately skilful love-poet of narrow range, who affords an occasional touch that makes the reader hesitate and consider whether he has not now and again struggled out and really emerged as a poet worthy of the name. We cannot say that in our own case the hesitation has ever lasted long. Nor can we say that we have not oftener hesitated and almost made up our mind to say of him, that he is very unprofitable, — a writer so affected, sentimental, and painfully self-conscious that the best that can be done in his case is to hope that this book of his, as it has “unpacked his bosom” of so much that is unhealthy, may have done him more good than it has given others pleasure. Of course to say so would be to speak far too harshly, and would convey a false impression. To say so would, however, express accurately enough one mood of mind into which the reader is thrown during the perusal of these poems; and it would really be no falser than very much of the praises which they have called out.

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3. — *History of the Norman Kings of England. From a new Collation of the Contemporary Chronicles.* By THOMAS COBBE, Barrister of the Inner Temple. London: Longmans, Green, & Co. 1869. 8vo. pp. xciii, 387.

MR. COBBE's history of the Norman Kings will serve very well for a while as a continuation of Mr. Freeman's incomplete work. It commences at the point which the latter has just reached, — the Conquest, and continues to the death of Stephen. Further, the two writers agree sufficiently well upon the nature of the early Constitution, and — what is more to the purpose — the nature of the Conquest, and the relation which the new king sustained to the English people. On the rather unimportant point whether Edward the Confessor nominated Harold as his successor, Mr. Cobbe doubts where Mr. Freeman believes; but on the more vital questions of the legitimacy of Harold's royalty, and the utter nullity of William's claims, they are entirely at one. Mr. Cobbe would vex the soul of Mr. Freeman by his use of the word *Saxon*, and